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Florida bans fluoride in drinking water

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Florida becomes second state to ban fluoride in public water

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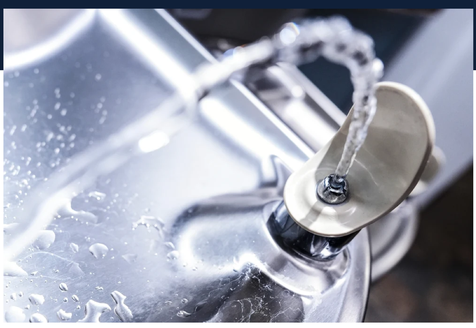

A public water fountain in Grosse Pointe Park, Mich. Paul Sancya / AP file

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By Mirna Alsharif

Florida has become the second state to officially ban fluoride in public water.

Gov. Ron DeSantis signed SB 700, also known as the Florida Farm Bill, into law Thursday. The bill doesn't specifically mention the word "fluoride," but it effectively bans the mineral by preventing "the use of certain additives in a water system." It will go into effect July 1.

"You've had this debate, and really Florida's led on this, too, partially because our Surgeon General, Joseph Ladapo, has really led the charge by going to counties and saying forcing fluoride into your water is actually not good," DeSantis, a Republican, said at a news conference Thursday afternoon. "Yes, use fluoride for your teeth, that's fine. But forcing it in the water supply is basically forced medication on people. They don't have a choice."

DeSantis said the fluoridation of water violates "informed consent." He also said the mineral has been proven to negatively affect pregnant women and children, inviting medical professionals, including Ladapo, to talk about the mineral's side effects.

A study published in 2019 suggested that IQ levels were slightly lower in kids whose mothers had higher measures of fluoride in their urine during pregnancy, but its research was far from conclusive.

The governor argued that there are other ways residents can get access to fluoride if they'd like and stressed that the mineral shouldn't be mandated by governments.

"There's nothing preventing you in your house from adding fluoride to your water," DeSantis said.

DeSantis signed the bill in Miami, where Mayor Daniella Levine Cava vetoed a fluoride ban that the county commission passed last month. NBC South Florida reported the commission voted 8-4 in favor of overriding Cava's veto last week.

Cava, a Democrat, has openly criticized the plan to ban fluoride in the state.

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"I am deeply disappointed by the Florida Legislature's decision to pursue a statewide ban on water fluoridation, a decision that disregards the overwhelming consensus of dentists, doctors, and medical experts and will end a practice that has been in place for decades to protect our health," she said in a statement issued last month.

Florida is following in the footsteps of Utah, where Gov. Spencer Cox, also a Republican, signed a bill in late March prohibiting any person or government entity from adding the mineral to the state's water systems, making it the first state to do so. It went into effect last Wednesday.

The anti-fluoridation movement has been gaining popularity, seemingly fueled by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has said drinking fluoridated water has no "systemic advantage."

Major public health groups, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, support adding fluoride to water, saying that drinking fluoridated water keeps teeth strong and reduces cavities. All studies have shown that it reduces tooth decay by 25%.

Legislation to ban fluoride has circulated in Kentucky, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Wisconsin and North Carolina. Hawaii, which has never mandated water fluoridation, has the "highest prevalence of tooth decay in the United States" among its children, with only 11% of its residents served by fluoridated community water systems, according to a 2015 study of third graders throughout the state by the state health department.

CORRECTION (May 15, 2025, 3:40 p.m. ET): A previous version of this article misstated when Utah's fluoride ban went into effect. It was last Wednesday, May 7, not next Wednesday.

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